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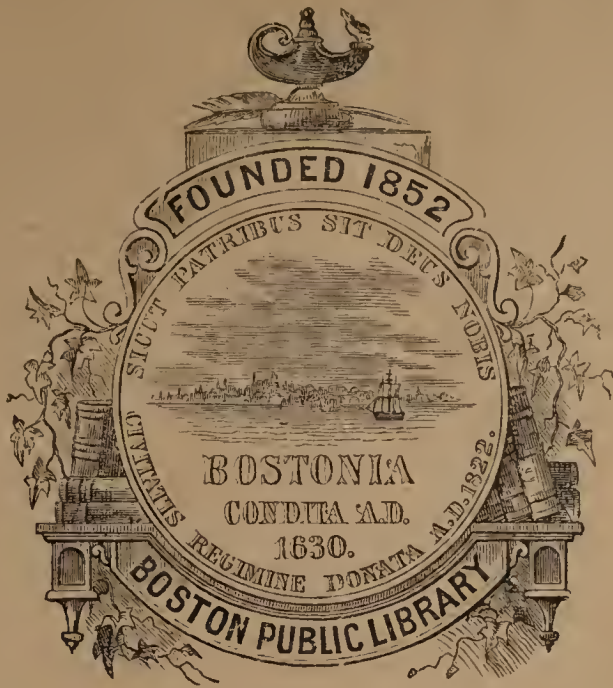
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PAMPHLETS.

Education.

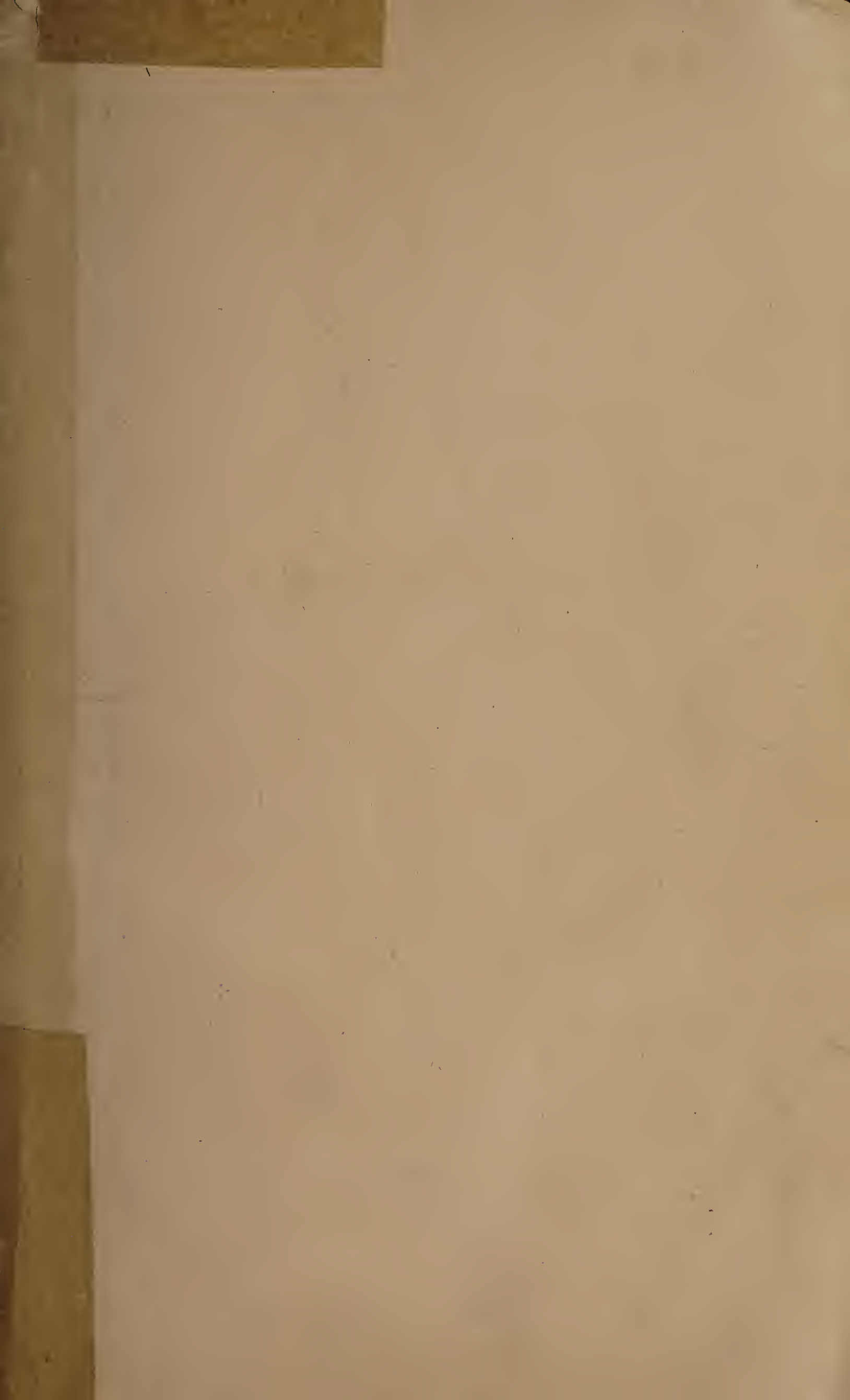
Essays, etc.

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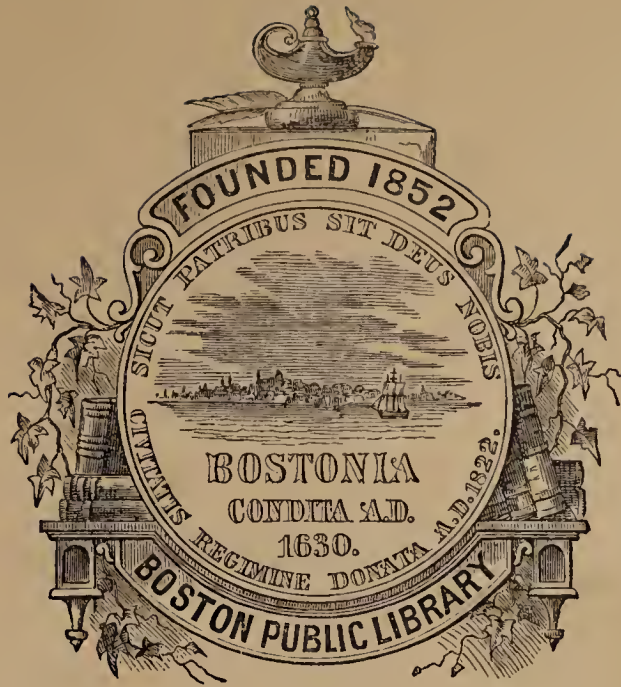
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PAMPHLETS.

Liberal Education

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Public Latin School

1822

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LIBERAL EDUCATION.

By the common consent of the eminent statesmen and lawgivers, as well as the learned in the most polished nations of Europe, a *good education*, whether designed for an accomplished gentleman, or for him who is destined to the labour of a professional life, must be founded upon what is emphatically called *Classical Learning*. So well established has this opinion long been throughout Europe, that no one dares to assume the rank of a well educated man, unless the foundation of his education has been deeply laid in that part of human knowledge. The soundness of this opinion has been much confirmed by the failure of the experiment made in France during the Revolution; when an unfortunate attempt was made to cultivate the *sciences*, to the neglect of classical learning. It is now understood, that the enlightened statesmen and scholars of that distinguished nation, have, for some time past, been directing their efforts to the reestablishing of clas-

sical learning in the rank which it held before the Revolution.

From these remarks, however, it must not be inferred, that the *sciences* are to be excluded from a course of liberal study; on the contrary, a certain portion of them constitutes an essential part of it. All our knowledge is classed under the two great divisions of *Science* and *Literature*; and if it were possible for any human being to master all science and all literature, undoubtedly such a man would be possessed of the most thorough education. But as this degree of knowledge is unattainable even by the most highly favoured of mortals, it becomes necessary in a practical course of study to make some apportionment of the science and literature, in which a young man is to be instructed; and, according as their relative proportions, and the periods of life when they should be respectively pursued, are the more or less accurately adjusted to each other, in the same degree will education be the more or less complete. Now, if we would qualify a young man to discharge, to the most advantage, his duties as a member of an enlightened society, whether in the learned professions or in other walks of life, a very small portion of science (in the popular acceptance of the term) will be found necessary; and the great objects of his pursuit should be acquisitions in useful literature, of which classical learning is the broad and solid basis. "The truth is," to adopt the

forcible language of Johnson, “that the knowledge of external nature, and the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes, are not the great or the frequent business of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing, the first requisite is, the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong; the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind, and with those examples, which may be said to embody truth and prove by events the reasonableness of opinions. Prudence and justice are virtues and excellencies of all times and of all places; we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary and at leisure. Physiological learning is of such rare emergence, that one may know another half his life, without being able to estimate his skill in hydrostatics or astronomy; but his moral and prudential character immediately appears. *Those authors, therefore, are to be read at schools, that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians.*”*

It is for the solid reasons, which are here so closely condensed by this great man—it is for the intrinsic value of the matter as well as the manner, which are

* Johnson’s Life of Milton.

so conspicuous in the classic writers—it is because their poets, and orators, and historians are models of thought and of writing, as their sculptors and architects are models in the fine arts—it is, because their thoughts and writings are so interwoven with the whole body and texture of all elegant and useful learning as to be inseparable from it without destroying the fabric itself—it is for these reasons, and not for the mere purpose of acquiring a knowledge of the languages of Greece and Rome, that the study of these immortal writers is so constantly urged upon us by the precepts and example of the greatest and most accomplished men.

To add any thing to the weight of Johnson's arguments and authority would be no easy task; but the following remarks of a distinguished British statesman and scholar of the present day, who knows the practical utility of a classical education, contain so just an estimate of these studies, that we cannot forbear presenting them to the reader.

“What (says Sir James Mackintosh, with an ardour and indignation, that overwhelmed his adversary in the debate on purchasing the classical library of Dr. Burney) “what would the inmates of that University [Oxford] say, when they heard, that they and all others who studied classical learning, were trained in frivolous questions respecting minute and unimportant distinctions? Was not the honourable member

aware, that in that classical education, to which so many superficial objections might be made, was comprised a course of indirect, but not the less forcible moral and political instruction, which had the greatest effect in the formation of the character? Were the lawgivers of this and other countries mere drivellers, when they recommended a degree of minute accuracy in these studies? But did not this accuracy form the criterion of a perfect familiarity with those authors who were the *models of thought, the masters of moral teaching and of civil wisdom*, and above all things, of CIVIL LIBERTY? He was ashamed to hear any part of knowledge treated as a luxury, or an amusement. Classic learning was in reality much more important than others, which had more direct connexion with the business of life, as it tended more to raise higher sentiments and to fix principles in the minds of youth than the sciences.” The same elegant scholar, also, in the splendid introduction to his *Lectures on the Law of Nations*, thus beautifully characterizes a most important class of the ancient writers—“All these relative duties of private life have been so copiously and beautifully treated by the moralists of antiquity, that few men will now choose to follow them, who are not actuated by the wild ambition of equalling Aristotle in precision, or rivalling Cicero in eloquence. The ancients (he adds) examined the foundations of our duty, but they felt and cherished a most seemly, a most rational

enthusiasm, when they contemplated the majestic edifice which is reared upon these solid foundations. If these grand sentiments of 'the good and fair' have sometimes prevented them from delivering the principles of Ethics with the nakedness and dryness of a science, at least we must own, that they have chosen the better part; that they have preferred the practical benefits of virtuous feeling to the speculative curiosities of moral theory. Perhaps these wise men may have supposed, that the minute dissection and anatomy of Virtue might, to the ill-judging eye, weaken the charm of her beauty."

Now a familiar knowledge of the works of antiquity must, it is obvious, depend upon a thorough acquaintance with the languages in which they are written; and the acquisition of languages being principally a subject of *the memory*, which is most tenacious in the early part of life, it follows, that the first periods of education are those which ought to be devoted to the study of languages; beginning with those of Greece and Rome and then, gradually extending our knowledge to others, both of ancient and modern times. We say, other languages besides Greek and Latin; because, in an enlarged and liberal plan of education adapted to the present extent of human knowledge, it will be a principle, that youth should be taught one language at least in each family or stock of languages spoken by the polished nations of the old world. In such a plan of

education, the Greek and Latin languages, besides being essential in the more important views already taken of them, will constitute the basis of the modern languages of the south of Europe.* For the *northern* languages, the German should be studied; and for the Oriental stock, a youth should be taught either Hebrew or Arabic, as opportunity of instruction in the one or the other shall be found. Thus, by the aid of only three or four languages, which may easily be acquired in the common period allowed for completing a liberal education, and without interrupting the necessary attention to the sciences, a young man may place within his command the various kindred dialects of those which he has thus learned, and, consequently, will be enabled to possess himself of all the science and literature which are locked up in those various tongues, and will have the means of advantageously directing his attention to any of the numerous departments of knowledge to which his taste may lead him. In respect to the Oriental languages, indeed (which have been deplorably neglected among us) so far are they from being the exclusive prerogative of divines, that some knowledge of them is an essential part of a liberal

* A few of the remarks which here follow, it will be perceived, were inserted in the last number of the Prize Book, in the article purporting to be an extract from a letter of a teacher to a parent on "the proper age for entering college." They were originally written in the connexion in which they now appear.

plan of education ; and no man, who is either ambitious of literary eminence, or desirous of prosecuting his studies in any department of ancient literature, with the most advantage to himself, will be content to remain wholly ignorant of them. For in these, as in other studies, no man, who is thus ignorant, can free himself from that slavish dependence which is the inevitable consequence of receiving knowledge at second hand from ill informed or prejudiced translators ; nor can he ever feel that manly confidence in himself, which is essential to a sure and steady progress in learning. Thus far our remarks upon Oriental learning have been confined to the general scholar ; and of the great value of this knowledge to such persons, we need no other evidence, than we have in the brilliant example of that accomplished scholar, Sir William Jones ; who, by means of his Oriental learning, was enabled to illustrate not only the physical and other sciences and the pages of the Greek and Roman writers, but even our own *Common Law*, as transmitted to us by our English ancestors. When, however, we consider the kind of education that is necessary for students in the most important of the professions, theology, the motives for acquiring a knowledge of the Oriental languages are incomparably more powerful than in the case just mentioned. Indeed it is difficult to conceive, how a theological student could ever have been satisfied with that slight

tincture of Oriental learning (little short of absolute ignorance) which has heretofore been the scanty portion of so many. Nor is it easy to find terms, sufficiently strong to characterize that boldness, which presumes to interpret the Scriptures (the most difficult perhaps and certainly the most important of all the volumes of antiquity) when the interpreter himself is utterly ignorant of the languages in which they are written.

We are fully aware, that the study of the ancient languages, particularly Greek and Latin, has not, in the opinion of some speculative persons, that degree of importance which is here given to it. But we do not think it necessary at this day to discuss a point which has been too long settled by the greatest statesmen, the most profound lawgivers and the most accomplished scholars of Europe, as well as of our own country, to be now drawn into controversy. “Seventeen ages (says a most able and energetic writer of our own metropolis)—“seventeen ages and the consent of all nations have settled this point.”* It is sufficient on the

* See two Essays on the *Establishment of more perfect schools*; by *A Parent*; originally published in the Boston Gazette of Feb. 25 and March 7, 1808, and republished the last year in the same paper, Nov. 8. We earnestly recommend them to all who take an interest in this subject. Who can forget, too, the animated and powerful manner in which our lamented Buckminster endeavoured to make us sensible of our duty in this respect, in his admirable Address to the Phi Beta Kappa Society, on the *Dangers and Duties of men of Letters in this country*. See Monthly Anthol. vol. vii. p. 145.

present occasion to remark that, in conformity with the opinions just mentioned, classical learning has been made an essential part of the course of study at our own university from its very origin to the present day. While, therefore, a due portion of the maturer years of our scholars is devoted to other studies, we should justly estimate the importance of the learned languages in the first periods of education; and above all, the languages of Greece and Rome, which contain those treasures of knowledge, emphatically called *classical learning*; treasures, which constitute the very basis of what is denominated elegant literature. We would not be supposed, however, to undervalue *scientific* pursuits, a portion of which certainly belongs to a complete education. But we attach the less importance to an intimate knowledge of the sciences, on account of the very rare use (comparatively speaking) which we find for those acquisitions in the practical business of life; a fact which is abundantly manifest from the circumstance, that we seldom find a man, who is engaged in any professional or other walk of life, however fond he may have been of science, that has not generally forgotten it all; and this can only be accounted for in the manner we have mentioned. Nor should it be forgotten, how much Science herself is indebted to Literature, by whose powerful aid her discoveries are rendered more useful by being made more interesting; for, dry as many of the sciences are to the student,

how much more so would they be, if it were not for the attractions thrown around them by the taste and ability of skilful writers. Now this high degree of excellence in writing is to be attained only by diligent study of the finished models of antiquity ; unless, therefore, a succession of accomplished scholars shall be kept up by a constant perseverance in these studies, Science herself may one day lament the loss of the most effectual means of perpetuating her own fame—the loss of the art of finished composition ; that art, which embalms in its own imperishable substance, the frail and perishable monuments of all other arts.

In order then to give our youth an opportunity of making higher acquisitions in classical learning than are now attained in this country, it is indispensable, that a longer time should be allotted to these studies than is now usually given to them. This must be done, either at the university, or at the preparatory schools ; and the latter would probably be found preferable, as it would occasion less interruption of other studies which are expected to be pursued at a *university*. If this should be thought best, then it will be necessary for the pupils to remain at school till the age of sixteen or seventeen years, as is the practice in Europe ; during which lengthened term of school-education boys would have an opportunity of reading more advantageously than they now do (even at our universities) many of the Greek and Roman authors,

of whose writings it is disgraceful, in the estimation of well educated Europeans, to be ignorant. But, whether it would be better to have this additional time allotted to Classical studies at school or at the University, is a point which we submit to those who have better means of judging than we possess. That one or the other must take place, is a point in which all intelligent men, who have any regard for the literary character of our country are now agreed. Something, it is true, has been done in our schools and in our universities towards improving the general system of education; but much more still remains to be done, particularly in *classical studies*, by which the character of our schools and universities will be estimated among foreign nations. If we would justly claim for our highest seminaries of learning the proud title of *universities*, we should feel it to be our duty to render them worthy of that elevated rank. But so long as we shall content ourselves with the humble course of classical study, which in foreign countries is confined to *schools*, our universities will not only forfeit their rank and name, but we shall be exposed to the derision of other nations. It is quite time, that the disjointed fragments of the Greek and Roman authors in our common Selections, (exquisite specimens, it is true, of noble fabrics) should be confined to schools, for which they were originally compiled; and where, too, they can yet be studied under able instructors with far more

advantage than is commonly the case at our higher seminaries. But at our *universities*, our youth should be made acquainted with the entire works of the great masters of poetry and oratory, of history and criticism and morals; with whose productions our scholars ought to be as familiar, as every lover of the fine arts is with the unrivalled monuments which the illustrious masters among the same nations have left us in sculpture and architecture. Not, indeed, for the purpose of blindly revering the canons of Aristotle or Longinus, of Cicero or Quintilian, merely because they were ancients; but because, notwithstanding the scrutinizing and persevering sagacity of modern times, the decisions of those immortal writers on questions of taste, remain yet unshaken—because beauty of composition, felicity of expression and justness of conception, were in those days most minutely investigated and carefully settled upon the soundest principles, upon the most accurate observations of nature herself; and, what was good taste in those ages at Athens and at Rome, is still good taste among the most polished nations of the globe in the present age.

[The two following Essays, taken from the "Liberal Education" of Vicesimus Knox, D. D. contain so many useful hints, and so much practical good sense, that they are here inserted for the benefit of those who may not have access to that most excellent and valuable work.]

ON WRITING EXERCISES.

Stylus optimus magister.

The pen is the best master.

Cic.

To ensure improvement, it is not enough to be passively attentive to instruction. Opportunities must be given to the student to display his attainments. He must learn to reduce theory to practice. He must exemplify his rules. He must be exercised in thinking. He must be accustomed to solitary study, and a habit must be formed of literary labour.

For all these reasons, it has been the custom of our best schools to exact from the scholars a written exercise, to be brought every morning on entrance into the school. Under proper regulations, and duly attended to both by the instructor and the pupil, this practice has been productive of effects greatly beneficial. I therefore recommend it to be universally pursued, as soon as the pupil shall be capable of writing easily and legibly.

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